(c) whether Government is also aware that organic food is healthy since there is no residue of pesticides and is also better in taste and quality;

(d) if so, whether Government is taking any step to switchover to organic food; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The "National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF)" is under implementation since October, 2004. The scheme includes training of farmers on organic farming, field demonstrations on organic inputs and creation of awareness through seminars, exhibitions, publicity through print and electronic media.

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) organizes and supports awareness programmes, seminars etc. in States having potential to grow organic produce for export.

Under National Horticulture Mission, assistance is given to farmers for organic farming, organic certification and setting up vermi-compost units.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) There is no proposal for complete switchover from conventional to organic farming as it is not possible to sustain present level of agricultural production or increase it without chemical inputs.

Treatment of crop diseases

"2265. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that crop diseases are being treated by chanting mantras and offering medicinal herbs in 'Havan Kunda' at Palampur Agricultural University;

(b) whether it is also a fact that this experiment has been successful in Brazil; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (c) Yes, Sir. In an experiment on Wild Marigold and *Aloe vera* the application of Organic Manure + *Homa Bhasma* and Organic Manure + Himbio (Mixture of local isolates of Trichoderma) gave higher yield as compared to Organic Manure alone.

Supervision of fishing operations by Coast Guard

2266. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an Empowered Committee on fisheries;

(b) whether it is a fact that this Committee has asked the Coast Guard to supervise the fishing operations of Indian fishermen near Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, the reasons for directing Coast Guard to interfere with fishing operations of Indian fishermen; and

(d) the steps proposed to call an urgent meeting of the Empowered Committee to solve the problems of fishermen with Coast Guard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir. With the approval of Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), Ministry of Agriculture has constituted an Inter-ministerial Empowered Committee (EC) on Marine Fisheries for making recommendations on various issues related to development of marine fisheries in India.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The Empowered Committee generally meets as often as required, but not less than once in six months depending on the necessity of holding this meeting. The last meeting of the EC was held on 16th April, 2009.

Remunerative price to coconut growers

2267. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that coconut growers are not getting remunerative price for their produce;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the zero per cent import duty on palmolin and palm oil is one of the reasons for the crash in prices of coconut;

(d) if so, whether Government will impose higher duty on palmolin and palm oil; and

(e) steps Government propose to take to give remunerative price to coconut growers?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The Government of India has been fixing Minimum Support Price for Copra and De-husked Coconut every year.

(c) and (d) Price of any commodity including coconut is determined by the overall market forces of demand and supply. In order to ensure that the farmers of the country are not put to any hardship, the Government has put in place a suitable mechanism for monitoring the import of sensitive items including agricultural items and is committed to provide adequate protection to the domestic producers by appropriate calibration of applied tariffs and safeguard action under certain specified circumstances. Given the production, availability and price situation in the country, appropriate measures are taken by the Government which include review of import.